

The background of the poster is a dark, atmospheric illustration. On the left, a red-armored figure with a glowing yellow 'A' on its chest stands on a rocky outcrop, firing a large, futuristic weapon that emits a bright orange and yellow flame. In the lower foreground, a dark, muscular, and somewhat monstrous figure is seen from behind, looking towards the right. On the right side, there is a dark, jagged-edged rectangular area with a starry space background. Inside this area, the text 'AetherCon' is written in a large, stylized, blue-outlined font. Below it, the dates 'November 14-16, 2014' are written in a similar blue-outlined font. At the bottom of this area, the website 'www.aethercon.com' is written in a smaller, green font. A bright, four-pointed starburst is centered in the space background.

AetherCon

November
14-16, 2014

www.aethercon.com

featuring

Jason Nelson
Legendary Games,

Jim Pinto
Post World Games,

Brian 'Fitz' Fitzpatrick
Moebius Adventures,
and many more...

Convention Program 2014

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Q&A With PostWorld Games

INTERVIEW WITH JIM PINTO
BY JONATHAN HICKS

Please welcome to Farsight Blogger Jim Pinto of Post World Games! Post World Games is dedicated to creating games that Jim loves to play, and also offers consulting advice, as well as developmental, editing, graphic, and writing services.

How did you get into gaming?

1980. Scholastic magazine reported about D&D. I was hooked before I ever read a word of the game. Started playing in 6th grade with my friend... Greg. I think that was his name. We played module B3. I got trapped in a web and a princess killed something with a dagger. That's all I remember. After that, I moved around a lot and tried to make time/room for gaming.

James Glover and I used to game in 9th grade. A lot. Robotech. Traveller. T&T. Runequest. We tried everything. But that didn't last.

10th grade was D&D and strat-o-matic football.

It wasn't until 1986 that I gamed on a regular basis with anyone. Andy Phillips (and I forgot the other guy's name). We'd game every weekend. Still remember my first all-nighter of Car Wars and Star Fleet Battles. I was

too young to realize they were the same game.

In college I got into Torg, Blood Bowl, and more D&D. And by 1992, I was the know-it-all at my local game store. The rest is history.

Favorite game?

It's hard to answer this question without context. Given that there are no constraints? I would say Kick the Can is the most perfect game. That's right. Double superlative. It just has everything a game should have. And kids have to make tough decisions. Can I make the run to the can before my name is called? Should I hide close or far? My earliest, most favoritist game memories.

If I had to pick a favorite RPG... Twilight: 2000, original edition. Despite the fact that I don't like any games similar to it. Favorite board game? Either Dominare or Carcassonne: Hunters and Gatherers. Favorite card game? The old Jyhad CCG. Favorite bidding game? Ra. Favorite war game? History of the World. Favorite Social Game? Anything without shouting. See. There are too many qualifiers to games.

THE CARCASS

A GAME OF POST-APOCALYPTIC
COMMUNITY BY JIM PINTO

POSTWORLDGAMES.COM



You run Post World Games, a website that offers 'design, development, discussion.' As well as your own games, you also offer consulting and advice for other gamers. What is it you offer, and how did the website come about?

I've been working for myself since 2006. I originally was doing graphics for people and I got tired of that and wanted to get back into writing. I'm one of the few people I know in the game industry who can do everything himself. So, I went about creating games that I wanted to play. Some of them were sitting around in my head. Others were just laying around on my hard-drive. Some still are. Post World Games is sort of my attempt to make what I want after years of making the same old tired games for people who don't know what they want. PWG might just be my rebellious streak.

One of these days I'll get around to charging people a consulting fee.

Your most recent game is 'The Carcass', a post-apocalyptic game that's not 'safe, soft or careful with the language'. It looks really good - what can you tell us about it, and what was the design ethic?

The original idea was unsafe PVP, fighting for control, dealing with the consequences kind of game. We don't have those anymore. All of the edges have been stripped off of modern games. Everyone is on equal footing all the time. Every class needs to be protected from harm. Every player needs to be protected from himself. There's so much soft, passive language in game design, I knew I wanted something mean. I just sort of started writing. Six hours later, I was playtesting it. Two weeks later, I had a game.

It wasn't originally going to be post-apocalyptic. But that's my favorite genre, so it was just a matter of building it differently. Which I think I did. Each time you play it's completely different. The world is built from the roles you pick, the questions you answer. I'm already thinking of doing a new edition, just to clean up some of the dents in the writing.

What else can we expect to see from Post World Games in the future?

I'm actually doing a mash-up in 2015. I said I never would, but I came upon an idea with Anthony Moro that just needed to be done. It's never been done before and so we're going to hopefully surprise people with it. He said with his fingers crossed.

After that, my fantasy game world that no one has ever heard about. Also writing that with Anthony. And of course, more Protocol games and more Carcass.

The tabletop roleplaying hobby has been through a lot changes over the years and it seems that its death-knell is always sounded when newer hobbies come along, such as collectible card games and online computer games. It still seems to be able to hold it's

own, though - what do you see happening to the hobby in the future? What changes, if any, do you think will have to be made to ensure its survival?

Well. It's a hobby. So it will never truly die. Even if there's only 12 guys playing in Uncle Pete's garage three times a year, roleplaying games will go on. It's the industry that has to worry about CCGs and computer games.

For me, I just make what I like. Eventually it finds an audience. Even if it's tiny. But there are certain financial boundaries to doing things. The day I do a kickstarter that needs 5k to survive and it only makes 2k is the day I need to move on from all this and become a greeter at Wal-Mart.

Best use of my talents, really.

THE CARCASS

The Carcass is a roleplaying story game where players take on the roles of the last members of a dying post-apocalyptic tribe. The tribal leader is dead, the community in tatters, and the future a mystery. What will become of you in this barren wasteland?

The Carcass is played over the course of three to eight hours (or more). Each player takes on the role of a character vital to the tribe. Devoid of a leader, however, each character believes himself or herself most capable of keeping the tribe alive.

Players create two characters. One is a key figure in the community and the player's main character. The other is an NPC member of the tribe of some influence. Beyond that, the tribe is made up of dozens of people who are just trying to survive.

The game revolves around unique action charts for each character role, instead of a system of narrow 'moves' defining the character options. Often player expectations focus on 'winning,' especially with such important goals created through character design. But the interesting actions in The Carcass are not about winning, but about dramatic results.

Jonathank Hicks is a published writer and has been gaming, writing, watching all kinds of weird and wonderful stuff and reading his heart out for more than thirty-five years. He has covered almost every type of genre, system and setting. If he's not writing a review for RPG, net or editing at Jedi News UK, he must be over at Frarsight Blogger writing his next inspirational post.

Links:

<http://www.rpg.net/reviews/search-review.phtml?reviewerName=Jonathan+Hicks>

<http://www.jedinews.co.uk/>

<http://farsightblogger.blogspot.co.uk/>

FARSIGHT BLOGGER
IT'S THE JOURNEY, NOT THE DESTINATION

Q&A With HUNTERS BOOKS

INTERVIEW WITH IVAN VAN NORMAN
BY SHANNON MACNAMARA

Thanks for doing this interview, Ivan. AetherCon and I appreciate it.

So I'm always curious how people who end up designing games got into gaming so what's your story?

Myself and my other two partners were all part of the same fraternity together, and we often asked the question (as many did back in 2003 of what would we do during a Zombie Apocalypse?). Also we played a lot of Role Playing Games. Basically my lead designer Chris De La Rosa showed us this homebrew version of a RPG he was working on, and after spending more time to consider it. We decided we could do this! We could print a book! We went into development on it for about half a year, and when we put our deposit down for GenCon, it became official. We were a company.

You've been prevalent in the gaming community. You were on a reality show, you and your partner created Outbreak: Undead and you had a follow up Kickstarter to Outbreak: Deep Space. What prompted your group to design a zombie RPG and how do you feel it differs from other gaming systems in that some of our readers may want to check it out?

We basically analyzed the market out there at the time of development and asked ourselves 'what hasn't been done before'. We felt that being able to play YOURSELF in a zombie apocalypse RPG was a really good idea. At this time too, Eden and AFMBE was out of print for about 5 years, and didn't look like they were coming back, so we ended up being the "Walking Dead" to their "Romero" so to speak.

It sounds like Outbreak: Deep Space has some awesome mechanics and ideas which make it unique in the tabletop RPG community so without "giving the farm away" would you like to expand any on the setting and mechanics?

Outbreak Deep Space pretty much is 'setting neutral' in many ways, in that you can structure the outbreak however you wish. But we did divide it up into 3 major 'styles' of terror. Invasion, Infestation, and Transdimensional Horror. We feel those pretty much cover the entire gamut of Sci Fi Survival Horror.

Hunters Books is working on a new edition of Outbreak: Undead and presenting it at Gencon 2015, yes? Tell us more about this project, please.

YOUR FUTURE HOLDS
THE DARKEST OF
NIGHTMARES...

OUTBREAK:
DEEP SPACE®

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Outbreak: Deep Space is a set of rules that will hopefully help people transition from Outbreak: Undead 1st Ed to the upcoming 2nd Ed. The Style of the game is very similar, just set in a more modern world, and accounting more for the addition of "Strongholds" which was very popular in the 1st ed. ruleset.

The KS is planned to go live in Q1 of 2015, with a release at GenCon 2015. Right now you can buy O:DS as well as get a PDF copy of our "O:U 2nd Ed. Primer". The Primer is like an early beta release of the rules. That way it helps us get the awesome feedback from our fan base we are looking for in order to make 2nd edition the best it can possibly be!

I have to ask, will the artwork be as awesome as the first edition because I have seen some of it and its top quality. Who were your artists and how did you get them to do such great work for your product?

Believe it or not, First Edition Outbreak: Undead was primarily done by our own team. The 'notebook style' layout allowed us to use a lot of sketch work which we felt helped set the style. I can tell you that we plan on making 2nd Ed even better (as well as in color) as far as design goes. We love the mix of photography and traditional style art, so expect to see more of that in the book.

In closing here's a question I always like to ask. What is it about tabletop RPGs that makes you passionate enough to keep creating scenarios and products for it as well as continuing to play in the venue when there are other options?

I love storytelling systems like Dread, Gumshoe, and World of Darkness. But honestly every system I pick up I can usually some merit in telling a story with it. It's about engaging your players in something, and getting them passionately involved in the telling of that story. It's about making 'great' moments with your players that they can look back on and think of with fondness.

One of my favorite stories though, is we had a gentlemen come visit our booth at GenCon in like... 2012. He came, loved the book, and told us he was going to play it with his friends who were all ex-military. Not a totally unique story. But what surprised us is when he came back a year later, he told us he sat down to our 40 Q personality test (that allows you to make yourself) online, and once he started playing with his friends he told us he felt literally *useless* compared to his friends. So he decided to make some huge life choices, and started getting more involved in his health and his training with his friends.

When we first met the guy, he was about 250-280 pounds. But he had told us he lost over 50, and was mostly muscle at that point. He had taken up martial arts, and attended the range pretty regularly now.

Now is that isn't satisfying as a game developer, I don't know what is.

Storyteller Shannon Macnamara is your everyman. He can be a writer, a gamer, a designer, or an artist. He's making the rounds, attending and exploring Gaming Conventions. Shannon writes a review about his Con escapades, tales about his gaming adventures, and whatnots on his StoryTellers blog.

Links:
<http://storytellersjem.blogspot.com/>

OUTBREAK

PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF HORROR TO THE EDGE OF THE UNIVERSE! From the Award Winning Developers of OUTBREAK: UNDEAD...

Outbreak: Deep Space is a Sci-Fi Survival Horror RPG that allows you to create your own nightmare world in the realm of Deep Space. Created using the same gritty, deadly, and unforgivable settings that you'd expect from the creators of Outbreak: Undead.

O:DS is an open world system that allows you to build 3 types of settings of Horror:

Infestation -

Creatures who mutate or bend the laws of nature, be it man-made or extraterrestrial.

Invasion -

Aliens with vastly superior technology to our own. This isn't war, its slaughter.

Trans Dimensional -

Vast Horrors from another reality, bending time and space and twisting the minds of man in its wake.

Explore various features, which put full emphasis on the Genre of "Survival Horror"

As your players generate 'RISK' with their actions, you can choose to use RISK to purchase a wide variety of hazards and upgrades during the game!

A simple Encounter Based System, which keeps gameplay either scripted and structured, or fast and loose!

Run Single Session Horrors or Sweeping Campaigns of Terror

Build Dread Slowly, or create action/adventure moments of gameplay!

Use the SPEW-AI to make YOURSELF into a character!

With Outbreak: Deep Space. We don't ask the Question If you're going to die, but how and when. What will you accomplish in that time?

by
The Gaming Life, playas ;) Storyteller
Shannon Mac

Q&A With HAZARD Studio

INTERVIEW WITH WALT ROBILLARD
BY MICAH HOLMES

For readers who are new to your products, what does Hazard Studios offer to the public?

HAZARD Studio was started in 2004 as a way for me to get back into art. We quickly became a crew who specialized in working with third party publishers who wanted to eventually get into the bigger game. We now publish SUPERS! The Comic Book RPG. In addition to SUPERS!, we also offer services producing art, layout, editing, and some graphic design.

How difficult is it to adjust to changing formats and technologies associated with comics or gaming materials?

The trick to staying with the times is to stay with the times. By connecting with other publishers and reading up on the latest tech, we can stay current. The balancing act is weighing whether or not your audience is ready or wanting of the new tech.

Of all the products that affected the gaming industry, what could we have done without?

We could have done without an endless stream of Word to market cheap products. While the OGL opened up gaming to make it more accessible for new publishers with great ideas, it also opened the shop to those just looking to make a quick buck. A constant stream of endless splat products are a great way to saturate and kill a product line. It was always a strain to see a GM struggle when a player would walk in with an untested splat stat that would blow out a game.

Are there any new releases from competitors you've taken a shine to?

TONS! I am a gamer first and foremost and really feel this is a great age for gaming. Savage Worlds and Icons really stoke the gamer in me and I love what the publishers and others are doing with them. SUPERS! was the game that blazed the comic book nerd in me and really brought it back to my game table.

Do you have a favorite moment when you realized the greatest satisfaction from your influence on comics or gaming?

When a fellow soldier who has suffered as a result of a TBI took up inking, coloring, and illustration as a way to work through. He has since started taking classes and is on his way with his first professional work.

Do you have advice for those looking to strike out in the comics or gaming fields?



Don't wait. If you have the drive to try something, give it a shot. Connect with those who are already doing those things and ask for advice. Don't be afraid to show off your work and don't be afraid to take an honest look at the advice and criticism you get. Immediately grow thick skin and never let a setback curb your enthusiasm.

In the light of current news in the comics industry, what's your opinion of using proper anatomical illustration for comics or sourcebook art?

Art is all about preference. If you don't like something, don't buy it.

Do you have plans to appear at physical conventions or trade shows in the future besides AetherCon?

No plans to be at a physical con any time soon. I am recently recovered from a pretty severe injury so all my time is conscripted to collaborating on cool products and regaining my KUNG FU POWAH!

Have you any new projects on the horizon you'd like to mention?

We have been collaborating with lots of folks on SUPERS! products. There is a lot I am looking forward to!

Now the 'Curveball': If it were the focus of crowdfunding, to what food-based promotion would you contribute?

Duh - PIZZA!

SUPERS REVISED EDITION

In the panels and pages of comics, it is often the hero's origin that molds them into someone that defies the odds and stands for Justice. Once set upon their path, these heroes rarely change as they stand the test of time and the unending call to action. This is not that story.

Building on rules created by Simon Washbourne, SUPERS Revised Edition takes the action and adventure of your favorite Super Heroic comics and slams it back down to your gaming table. Crafted by system experts Aldo Regalado and Rus Boyd, SUPERS Revised Edition take the rules you love and make them the rules you can't game without!

Simplified and unified mechanics mean less time in the book and more time in the battle. Don't stand idly by as comic book heroes steal the spotlight. With SUPERS Revised Edition: Build your Supers! Build your world! Be Heroic!

Micah Holmes is a published author and illustrator. He wrote the fantastic "Tyme And Yon Serpent (Serpent's Tail Book 1)" & is working his magic on the upcoming gem "Once Upon Tun'Rumma".

He is a full time loving husband and father and spends the rest of his time working on his book or at his dayjob as Quality Control Inspector.

Links:

<http://www.amazon.com/Tyme-Serpent-Serpents-Tail-Book-ebook/dp/B004FPZ0BU>



PRIZE HALL



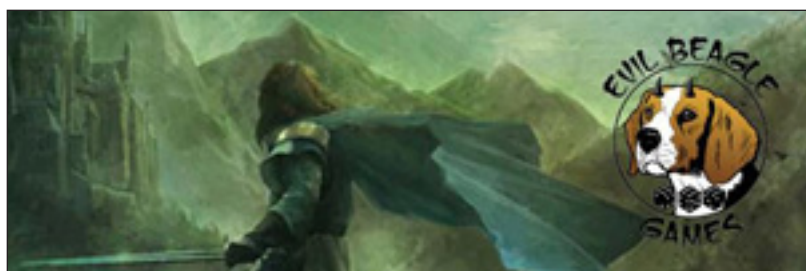
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Q&A With LEGENDARY GAMES

INTERVIEW WITH JASON NELSON
BY SHANNON MCNAMARA

So I'm always curious how people who end up designing games got into gaming so what's your story?

It was not long after I started playing D&D in March 1981 that I caught the bug to start designing my own stuff. The first adventure I ever wrote was based off an episode of the short-lived "Blackstar" cartoon, involving a floating city full of zombies under the control of an evil wizard with magic orb, and what I thought was a brilliant climax featuring a wraith dragon (my own creation) guarding a helm of brilliance under a series of 3 separate traps. I DMed for my brother and my friends, usually people years older than I was. I used published modules and modified them or used my own twists, but I was always writing, writing, writing. I posted up thousands and thousands of words on rec.games.frp (then later rec.games.frp.dnd), and later had someone host a geocities page for me.

I say all that just to reinforce the obvious point that "getting into RPG design" doesn't start when you get your first paycheck. The only way to get better at writing is to write, and write I did. I sent

off a submission to Dungeon magazine back in 1991. No joy. My first paid gig didn't happen until over a decade later, when Julia Martin asked me to write a DMing advice column for the Wizards of the Coast website, which I did for 5 years. I had a few adventures and articles published in Dungeon and in Dragon during that time, but in spring of 2007 that all evaporated when Wizards cut outside freelancers off to (secretly, at that time) start work on 4th Ed, which also shut down opportunities in Dungeon and Dragon, though nobody knew it at the time.

Cue the first RPG Superstar contest that fall. I entered just as a lark. A "why not?" moment. My item was picked for the top 32, and my first thought was, "That's cool, but I'm probably not going to win." My second thought, though, was, "Wait a minute, why NOT me?" If it's a battle to the finish, let's just start throwing haymakers and see how far we go. My goal was to get through every round, to show everything I could do, and so I did, making it all the way to the Final Four. We turned in our adventure submissions. Mine didn't win. Was that the end? No. Thumbs up to Christine



For all your deep sea excursions! Adventure Plug-ins for your pirate campaign, NPCs, and Treasure!

4 **PATHFINDER**
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

LEGENDARY GAMES

Schneider for being the first-ever Superstar champ, but what does it mean to WIN? I don't have the trophy or the title. But if you look back at the last 6-1/2 years since then what I do have is more writing credits for Paizo than anyone else who's ever been in the contest, from hardback rulebooks to AP adventures, Campaign Setting, Companions, Chronicles, and all the rest. Looking back, I'd call that a win.

I think my most fun project was my first AP adventure, "The End of Eternity," for Legacy of Fire, if only because things were still fairly open-ended in those days and my directive was really to create a Harryhausen-style magical archipelago. I had a map and three paragraphs of text describing what needed to be in the adventure, and I think we pulled together an amazing ride that people still love.

I've had a lot of great experiences, though. Making the NPC parties for the Rival Guide was great fun, I loved doing the mass combat and kingdom-building chapter for Ultimate Campaign, doing a bunch of Monsters Revisited products, the Lost Cities of Golarion, and the list goes on.

Since 2011, I've also been a part of Legendary Games, and that's been an amazing experience in a different way, but that's a few questions farther down so I'll answer that there.

What is it about your products which makes them unique and worth checking out for curious gamers?

The best thing about Legendary is the people. We are very intentional about the people we bring onto the team at Legendary, because when you buy a product from us we want you to rest assured that you are getting the very same writing talent you get when you pick up official Pathfinder products. You get products written by RPG Superstar champions like Neil Spicer, Matt Goodall, and Mike Welham and a slew of finalists, plus the top-name veteran freelancers in the Pathfinder stable like Greg Vaughan, Tim Hitchcock, Nicolas Logue, and very shortly Richard Pett. The authors on our team have written over 60% of the Pathfinder AP modules from Runelords to Iron Gods and going forward. This is not to say that great ideas can't come from anybody; there are a ton of creative people in this hobby. But if you want the best, the ones that have proven over and over again that they know Pathfinder fluff and crunch like nobody else, that's what you'll get when you pick up a product from Legendary Games. We even use many of the same artists you'll see in Pathfinder products, like Lazz, Michael Jaecks, Jason Juta, Tim Kings-Lynne, and more.

But it's not just about the people. It's about giving

those people the freedom to create with passion and bold vision. At Legendary, if you've got an idea and you pitch it hard, we will back you to the wall. Then it's your job to make it awesome, and time after time our people deliver.

If you like vivid description, inventive mechanics, cohesive design, detailed backstory, terrific production values, and the focused awesomeness of the best names in the Pathfinder business, with the surety that these are the same people entrusted to produce much of the official product you are already using, whose qualifications are well earned through consistently delivering the goods time after time after time, then Legendary Games products are for you.

People who play official Adventure Paths, of course, have a special motivation to use our products, because they are uniquely situated to make those APs more awesome, but nothing that we do is tied so tightly to those APs that it doesn't stand up as fantastic all on its own. If you're running a campaign that even veers into the themes of pirates, gothic horror, kingdom-building, mass combat, fairies, demons, monsters, magic, or anything else we've covered, these products will (as we like to say) help Make Your Game Legendary!

Tell us about your top three products and which type of gamers might be interested in them and why?

To narrow it down to just three is tough, though if you are thinking in terms of sales it would be:

1. *The Ultimate Rulership-Ultimate Battle-Ultimate War* series of products that offer up a radical expansion of the kingdom-building and mass combat rules for Pathfinder. If you want to include kingdom creation and management or mass combat on land, sea, or sky in your Pathfinder campaign but the base rules from Ultimate Campaign (which I also wrote) don't provide the level of detail you'd like, these products are a terrific option for you.
2. *The Gothic Campaign Compendium* hardback, which includes all 17 of our Gothic horror-themed products, compiled and reorganized as an amazing resource for any Pathfinder campaign that includes horror themes and elements. Whether you're a player wanting horror-themed feats, spells, and archetypes or a GM wanting monsters, adventures, new rules subsystems for mad scientists and mutations, richly creepy tomes of unspeakable forbidden lore, richly detailed sample characters, or a wealth of advice on running a horror game, it's all here between two covers.
3. *The Way of Ki* and its follow-up *Meditations of the Imperial Mystics* presented a huge expansion to the system of ki used in Pathfinder, not only for classes

that already use ki like the monk and ninja, but as part of a holistic system that opens up the use of ki to characters from every class. From traditional Eastern philosophies and energy centers to glorious wuxia stunts, anyone wanting to make the martial arts more amazing in their Pathfinder game can get great use out of these products.

Our primary product lines are as follows:

Adventure Path Plug-Ins: We have supplemental products for five of Paizo's official Adventure Paths, including APs focused on Gothic Horror (issues #43-48), an epic journey to the Far East (issues #49-54), Kingdom-Building in a fey-haunted forested wilderness (#31-36), a Righteous Crusade against the demon lands (#73-78), and Pirates (#55-60)! We'll shortly be releasing products dealing with an AP about crashed spaceships and Metal Gods (#85-90), with others in the works as well. I'm sure your readers can figure out the official titles of those APs themselves.

These products include adventures, spells, magic items, monsters, and more, as well as rules supplements dealing with martial arts, cults, mad scientists, alien horrors from beyond the stars, faeries and their impact on the world, an entire line of ultra-detailed playable pregenerated characters, sinister villains with diabolically detailed backstories, and more. We had an entire mini-line devoted just to Gothic Grimoires - tomes of terrible secrets that contained class options, spells, feats, and more, but at an awful cost to the reader who dared brave the backstories behind these books.

Mythic Plug-Ins: We've been huge supporters of the mythic rules since they came out, producing one product with mythic versions of every spell in the Core Rulebook, along with over a dozen books of mythic monsters and dozens of small one-page Mythic Minis detailing mythic feats, path abilities, and more. We ran a very successful Kickstarter this past spring to fund the creation of THREE hardback books converting every feat, spell, class ability, and more across the entire line of Pathfinder core books. We ran this in cooperation with Kobold Press, Rogue Genius Games, and Dreamscarred Press, an unprecedented four-way 3PP Kickstarter team-up, but one that produced very exciting results. We're all hard at work now on these books, which will be available for next year's summer convention season.

Ultimate Plug-Ins: These are something of a personal passion project, in that these products are designed to supplement the Pathfinder core rulebooks in a variety of ways. Thus far, the products in this line have been the best-selling of anything we've made, with Ultimate Rulership, Ultimate Battle, and Ultimate War, offering huge



expansions to the kingdom-building and mass combat rules that I developed in the official Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Campaign hardback. We have another expansion planned called Ultimate Armies that will be dealing with premade armies, the troop subtype, and mercenary companies, and we will soon be debuting a short project called Ultimate Relationships that helps integrate PC-NPC relationships into ongoing campaigns, with a whole line of support products targeted at published APs and the NPCs in them.

Your Mythic Mania Kickstarter was quite popular. I see that you had an initial goal of \$5,000 and got close to \$70,000. Tell us about it and also if people who are late to the Kickstarter can purchase this product at a later point.

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/legendarygames/mythic-mania-three-mythic-rulebooks-for-pathfinder>

We started producing content for the mythic rules for Pathfinder when they came out, including Mythic Magic: Core Spells that converted over 400 spells from the Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook that weren't in Mythic Adventures. We followed that up with a long-running series of Mythic Monsters products, of which we've now produced almost two dozen, each one taking a particular monster type like "demons" or "oozes" or a monster theme like "fairy tale creatures" and converting a dozen existing mythic monsters plus adding a brand-new one and a section of bonus material related to monsters of that type. We later started producing a line of weekly Mythic Minis that included conversions of existing mythic feats, new mythic feats, new path abilities for the various mythic paths, and now mythic magic items.

I really liked the potential of the mythic rules to revisit a lot of existing places in the rules and make them more exciting and more varied in their scope and theme--to make the rules live up to the flavor text in ways they didn't always quite do. Our first offerings for the mythic rules did pretty well, and I started thinking about the potential of making an encyclopedic conversion of the mythic rules. This was after the end of our first Kickstarter, to get the Gothic Campaign Compendium in print, as well as Kobold Press' Deep Magic Kickstarter, and I thought about making it bigger than just the core Paizo product lines. People ask sometimes why more 3rd party companies don't do team-ups on products, and I thought this might be a place to do just that.

I started talking to Wolfgang Baur from Kobold Press, and he was interested in getting together on the project. Not long after, Owen Stephens started producing some mythic products as well,

focused on feats and class abilities, and invited him to the party. Earlier on, Jeremy Smith from Dreamscarred had emailed me asking if Legendary Games was going to do any mythic psionics; I told him I loved psionics but didn't have the bandwidth to do it. Fast forward some months later, as we're getting this project organized, and Jeremy hit me up again to let me know he had been working on mythic psionics, and we decided to add that into the project as well. So now you had a 4-way team-up on this mythic project, bringing together the top 3PPs for Pathfinder on a project that was going to produce not just one core book but THREE.

For the Kickstarter, we focused on breaking it into manageable pieces, based on what we had already completed and what we had in mind to add in later. That basic funding level would have gotten us one short book; not what we ideally would want for the project, but if that was all people wanted then so be it. The appetite for mythic product was going to be hard to judge; it was a niche market (mythic) in what is already a niche market of Pathfinder players (themselves a niche) who also use 3rd party products. From that basis, we structured it so it was very transparent as to what would be added, and the higher we went the more stuff would be added. We designed it to be very interactive, with backers voting on monsters they wanted to include from every group, and being able to sponsor specific rules elements they wanted included. People really liked it, and it just took off, going from that small beginning to funding three 300+ page hardbacks.

The books and PDFs will be available for next summer's convention season. If all goes well, we hope to have them available for PaizoCon 2015 next Memorial Day weekend, but if not we will definitely have them available for GenCon, where we are again planning a team-up event with some other 3rd party companies.

In closing here's a question I always like to ask. What is it about tabletop RPGs that makes you passionate enough to keep creating scenarios and products for it as well as continuing to play in the venue when there are other options?

Tabletop RPGs are fun. That's a good reason for starters. It's a great time to get together with friends and sling the dice, trying out new things sometimes and other times leaning back on old favorites. They have infinite replay value because they offer infinite variability in the play experience. Well, not infinite, but there's an awful lot of room to try new and different things within Pathfinder or across different systems.

Another thing is that when you're a writer, you write. You find that you can't not do it. People entering a contest like RPG Superstar sometimes talk about how hard it was coming up with an idea, while others have said they didn't enter because

they didn't want Paizo to "steal their idea." Here's the thing: If you only have one good idea, you're probably not quite ready to dive into the deep end of the game design pool. Once you get into the groove of doing it, ideas are cheap and easy, and there are always going to be more of them. What separates you is the ability to execute those ideas in a way that's cool and fun. For some people, that's a lot of work. For others, it's still a lot of work, but it's also fun. Writers like to write.

I finished my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies some years ago, ironically right as the professorial job market completely crashed. I spent some teaching, but I've also spent a fair bit of time doing research and writing, and I discovered that I like writing a lot more than I like teaching. So I decided to make writing my full-time job. I still have other hobbies and interests from family to church to football, but I write in the morning, I write during the day, I write at night. My hobby is my job. There are times when it's a grind, especially when a deadline is approaching, but I just like to write. If I didn't write about RPGs, I'd probably find something else to write about, but writing RPGs is more fun than the alternative.

Tim Hitchcock gave me a line once that I really liked when he told me that the genius element of RPGs is that they are more fun to think about playing than they are to play. They're fun to play, sure, but think how much time we spend by comparison thinking about the next game session or adventure or monster or magic or whatever it may be. I know for me I spent wayyyyyyyy more time noodling around with the game than I spent playing it with anybody, and I've spent a lot of hours playing it over the years. It's a thing we do that is limited only by imagination, and anything you can think of can be a new doorway to something fun.

Storyteller Shannon Macnamara is your everyman. He can be a writer, a gamer, a designer, or an artist. He's making the rounds, attending and exploring Gaming Conventions. Shannon writes a review about his Con escapades, tales about his gaming adventures, and whatnots on his StoryTellers blog.

Links:
<http://storytellersjem.blogspot.com/>

LEGENDARY

Legendary Games is an all-star team of top designers for the Pathfinder RPG and more, featuring Superstar champions and industry veterans, each one a major contributor to the official Pathfinder RPG product lines. Legendary Games produces fantastic plug-in supplements and adventures that are ideal companions for the official Adventure Paths but also stand on their own in any campaign. From horror to the Far East, fairy forests to demon wastes, kingdom-building to mass combat, rollicking pirate voyages to crashed starships and more, you will find products as beautiful as they are detailed to enrich your game. Legendary Games is also the flagship company for expansions of the mythic rules, with dozens of supplements featuring feats, spells, monsters, and more. Every product they make will help Make Your Game Legendary!

Legendary Games has also branched out into adventures for the 5th Edition of the world's most famous roleplaying game, and next year will be producing their own Legendary Planet adventure path and campaign setting.

The Gaming Life, playas ;) by Storyteller Shannon Mac

Q&A With IMMERSION STUDIOS

INTERVIEW WITH OLIVER SHEAD
BY KENNY NORRIS

Today I have the privilege, on AetherCon III, to be interviewing Oliver R. Shead. Oliver is the founder of Immersion Studios and the creator of Immersion Universal Roleplaying Game (which I call IRPG for short).

Hey there, Oliver.

G'day Kenny! Good to be here.

Before we get into the nitty-gritty part of the interview, Oliver, I want to know more about you. What is your gaming background and how did that lead you into creating IRPG?

I have been playing RPG's since I was thirteen, when an AD&D fanatic led a bunch of us down the rabbit hole into some of the most fun I had ever had. He was an excellent DM, and he made the adventures absolutely terrifying, exhilarating and real. The experience made me intent for more, and since then my friends and I have been playing continuously! We played AD&D, D&D 3.5,

a bit of Pathfinder, countless years of Rifts and Heroes Unlimited, and also graduated to the World of Darkness games. However, I always ended up using extensive home brew rules, and these were so successful that one day I decided I should actually write them down, rather than just keep them bouncing around in my head. And then, one day, I realised that I didn't want to just keep all this stuff to myself. I felt I had discovered something really cool, something that loads of people would really enjoy. And it's a lot more fun to share that with others!

So you started out as a tinkerer of systems. Does this come out in IRPG? What other core philosophies shape IRPG?

When I first started writing down my homebrew rules, I soon realised that I actually needed an entirely new system. None of the systems I had tried were giving me exactly what I wanted. There was always some limitation - they worked well in this situation, or in that setting.

I wanted something that would both accurately represent the real world, and the fantastic at the same time. It should be able to pit the ancient against the modern, magic against technology, or whatever you want! And it



should be totally customizable too - so if you want a totally realistic game, where you're just a normal guy, you can have that, or if you want a highly heroic game, with the heroes wading through a hail of bullets at every turn, you can have that too.

Our objective is to give you a totally immersive experience. We want the world to feel real, to feel utterly vivid, like you're experiencing exactly what your character is, so that you feel the cold wind off the glaciers, and flinch as an arrow snaps past your face.

How do the rules within IRPG allow these experiences to come to the fore?

There are really many ways that this happens. One is that there is a gradient of success. You can succeed spectacularly, or only barely. Your arrow can hit your foe in the throat, or just barely nick him. In essence, you have a number of "successes" when you perform an action. There are of course other systems that make use of this (like GURPS or WoD), but we aim to make a finer differentiation. Small things can make a big difference in this game - a small bonus, a minor assistance, can be very precious things!

We also have character statistics that represent who the character really is. Things such as Resolve, Courage, and Luck, which not only show who a character really is, but also have a direct relation to the game.

One of the most important things is also the Health level of the characters, which is standardly kept fairly low, compared to many other games. This is customizable, but even at highly heroic levels, things like knives, knuckle dusters, and even a sharpened stick can be very dangerous. This adds a level of realism and immediacy to the game, as characters primarily rely on not getting hit in the first place, or on having armour to absorb these impacts, just as you would in reality. Sadly, humans are soft and frail at the best of times, and bullets and knives can be seriously damaging if given the opportunity. Thus, there aren't many "slugging matches" in Immersion RPG, wherein characters stand in front of each other and just trade hits. Characters use strategy, movement, and powers - and the smarter you use them, the better! You'll find that combats tend to move, evolve, use the environment, and everything in it - which makes them really dynamic and intense.

Immersion RPG is also totally classless and levelless. It's block built, and utterly customisable. You don't simply play "a warrior" or "a paladin," with a prescribed skill set. Because people are far more complex than that. Instead, what about playing a one-time mason who is now a hard-bitten veteran of several campaigns, and has now come to change his ways and seek a better path - a path of purity and goodness, fighting evil at every turn. Such a character could be a warrior or a paladin...but really he is both of those things, and much more.

With this you can play a real live person, someone who lives and breathes, with a history, flaws, foibles, strengths and weaknesses. And the social skills are really important too!

That sounds just like what I look for in the games I love to play! So how does IRPG work, better still, tell us your favourite mechanic in IRPG?

Really it's the basic mechanic. You usually roll two dice, one representing an Attribute (basic quality of the character, like Strength, Dexterity, Intelligence, etc.) and another representing a Skill or Power (such as Melee, Athletics or Pyromancy - control of fire). The dice are each added separately to their corresponding stat, and the numbers they get over 10 are counted as "successes" (i.e. if both your stats were 5's, and you rolled a 7 and a 9, you would have gotten a 12 and a 16, so 2 and 6 successes respectively, 8 successes total).

Because there are two (or sometimes more), it means there's more of a chance of a "middle ground," and less chance of just totally failing or spectacularly succeeding. It also gives a lot of different possible combinations (like Courage with Athletics for example), and room to make unusual actions work quite realistically.

I like that and can see that working well. Now onto a 'sore' (:) point for me: are you one of the fortunate roleplayers who manage to get round a table (of sorts) and game on a regular basis?

I do indeed! It has been a weekly ritual of mine now since those fateful days some 14 years ago (yikes!), and the week just is not complete without a night of dice rolling and great laughs. My gaming group waxes and wanes as people come and go from my local area, but I also make use of Skype and Roll20 to keep in touch with people around the world. In fact, I'm currently organising a playtest between a gamer over on the West Coast of the USA, and another gamer in Auckland, New Zealand! I have come to discover that online gaming is actually a hell of a lot of fun.

I'm glad to hear that you still game and that you manage to get to game online too. That's something I've not yet done. Within your group do you get to play IRPG?

Absolutely! And my team of awesome playtesters are responsible for many of the changes in the rules that have led to the more balanced, less complicated system we have today. Personally I enjoy playing Immersion RPG the most, as it is really the system I was always looking for. We do, however, change the setting all the time. One day we're playing Infected, a nightmarishly realistic zombie apocalypse, and the next day we'll be donning a top hat and investigating a supernatural murder in London, in our Steam and Gears game.

Ah, yes, simplicity is important, so is flexibility. A point which I'm turning towards now. Outside of playtesting IRPG are you lucky enough to get to play other roleplaying games?

I am indeed! I still have a game of Rifts ongoing, which has lasted some 12 years, with the same original 2 characters that began all those years ago. That is truly an epic, and we have continued playing using the Rifts rules because it just wouldn't feel the same to change it. I also play Pathfinder when given the chance, and am itching for a chance to have a crack at D&D 5th Ed. I love the old school approach it's taken.

I love variety, and find that playing other games always gives me a different perspective for my own creation. And besides, they're always awesome fun.

Wow, 12 years, that's a long game. I'm lucky if the campaigns I played in, way back when, lasted 6 months. Of those RPGs you played what ones influenced IRPG?

Really all the ones I mentioned in the beginning. I think of them all, D&D and WoD were the most influential in the mechanics. But I wouldn't underestimate Rifts. I have played a lot of that game, and the sheer breadth of the setting really opened my eyes to possibilities.

Talking about possibilities leads us nicely to the possibilities inherent in crowdfunding. You've mentioned that you're looking to crowdfund IRPG. What are your thoughts on crowdfunding in the roleplaying sphere and what do you want to get out of crowdfunding?

INFECTED!

The world is gone. Dead. The cities lie barren and empty. Their windows stare sightlessly out at you as you pick your way through the rubble. Burnt out cars litter the eerie streets, grass starting to grow from them.

The world is gone. But you remain. Because you are a survivor. One of the few who have fought, scrounged, killed and run to stay alive.

And...you are not alone.

The Infection that brought down civilization has left its mark. Those who survived were hungry. Retaining nothing but that hunger and an animal cunning, they hunt you still. And they are many.

What will you do to survive?

Infected! RPG is the upcoming first release of a series of games using the Immersion RPG System, a totally flexible, limitless system that literally immerses you in the game, with fast-paced action and vivid characterization. Playtest rules are available. Kickstarter coming soon!

To be honest I am new to the crowdfunding sphere, and I was absolutely stunned by the level of support out there for quite a number of games. Gamers are passionate people, and this has absolutely demonstrated that! I do think that the crowdfunding option has made independent publishing far more possible, but I think this is mostly the case if you can demonstrate that you are able to deliver a high-quality product.

The future of this looks bright, so long as gamers continue to be passionate about what they do. And I don't think that's likely to change - particularly seeing as gaming is going so strongly, and I think is only set to get stronger and stronger.

Personally, I would like to use the crowdfunding to accelerate the publication of my products. There are so many settings, so many worlds, adventures, and cool things that I want to get out there! And also knowing people are out there who want to delve into those worlds is something that gets me very, very excited. It's really why I get out of bed in the morning!

If the crowdfunding goes really well, then it may just mean I can get started on releasing the full line of setting books that I've got in the pipeline, as well as get fiction books out there on those settings, we may even get into some comics...really you name it, and we're gearing up to get started! But having some of the finance in place would go a great deal to making these things a reality sooner.

Wow you really do dream big. When do you hope that your crowdfunding campaign will start?

It should be early in 2015.

Oliver where can we find out more about IRPG, and get a copy of the beta version?

The Immersion RPG website is: <http://www.immersion-rpg.com/> and the playtesters beta is <http://www.immersion-rpg.com/playtesters/>

We are really keen for people to start gaming and give us their feedback. It goes a long way towards giving you the best experience when the books come out.

Thanks for the interview Oliver.

Thank you Kenny!

Kenny Norris or Kenny the Cabbage is one of those all too common roleplayers who is unable to game in a group (online or offline). It took him years but at long last found a new way to game without the need of a group. Join Kenny the Cabbage as he prepares to launch a blog about solo roleplaying: SoloRoleplayer.com

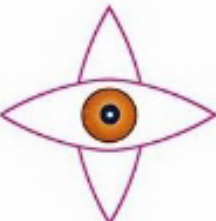
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Q&A With Eldritch Enterprises

INTERVIEW WITH
CHRISTOPHER CLARK, JAMES
M. WARD, & TIM KASK
BY RANDALL NEWNHAM

When I look at Eldritch Enterprises' offerings, the term that immediately comes to mind is "old school": everything from the adventure descriptions to the art is rendered in a style reminiscent of the early days of roleplaying. Tell me more about your decision to make these kinds of adventures.

CHRIS CLARK: Let's face it, the three guys I work with (James M. Ward, Tim Kask, and Frank Mentzer) are the titans of old school. In more meaningful terms: they wrote a lot of what are now considered 'Classic' adventures. In addition, all of us play, write, and "think" (if you will) in 1st.Edition D&D terms, so writing the adventures in the classic style was a no-brainer. Couple this with the fact that very few folks do still write old-school style, (there are some) and you have the basis for our decision: there's an unfulfilled need in the market. Let's fill it.

JAMES M WARD: I don't know about my partners in design, but I have always written in that style. Gary Gygax taught me how to design and his primary point was "the story is the thing". The rules of the game and the stats on the monsters are secondary to the players enjoying the game. This is part of the essence of "old style" and that is what I do best. I can write in this different style of 2014 but when people put me to design work, they almost always want "old style" adventure.

TIM KASK: I write what I know. As I was one of the architects of what is now considered "old school" it would be foolish for me to step outside of what I know.

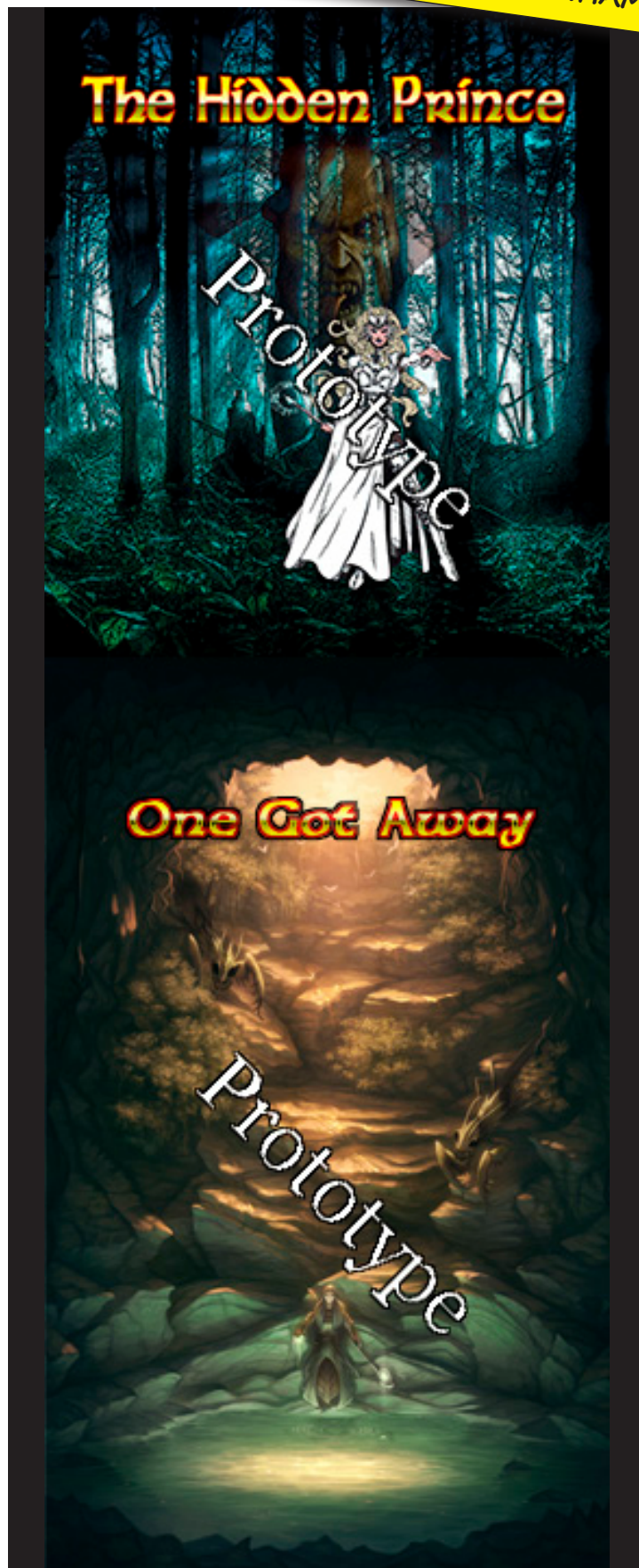
The roster of designers for your company is absolutely stellar, with everyone having literally decades of game design experience. How did you decide to get together and form Eldritch Enterprises?

CC: Eldritch is actually Frank's brainchild. He began a preliminary discussion about forming the company back in 2009... and basically had it all put together by 2011. He wanted to get back to writing for the industry in 'his own company' (rather than freelance), and his ideas were good. How could the rest of us say no?

JMW: Frank gathered us like ripe apples from a tree and brought the group together. I think he expected after two years for use to be far more successful that we are at present. The group has fun, and I think we are all constantly learning from each other. I know I'm a far better game designer after taking advice from Tim and Chris.

TK: Frank and I for some had batted around the idea of doing our own thing, together. And with some others of great skills and talents, for several years. The synergy that we can sometimes produce is astonishing

Is there anything you feel the current RPGs lack that was present in the earlier days?



CC: The nexial aspect. Nothing was 'forbidden' in early rpgs; there was only rarely a distinct 'path to follow'. Your character could travel in any direction without ruining the story line, undertake any type of activity without needing a rule or skill for it, etc. I suppose, in actuality, it was simply more freeform. That's how I play, and 'leaving lots of options open' is how I write as well.

JMW: With my view that the "story is the thing" I believe most companies are stripping away stories. Look at the big boy who bought TSR with nine thriving story lines and doesn't produce them any more to see what happens when you strip stories from a game system.

I don't think that companies are adding much new and useful to the RPG hobby gaming industry. I think technologies like Skype and large websites of free adventure product help to keep gamer's interested.

TK: They lack the devil-take-the-hindmost, anything is possible wonder and awe. There are too many rules, too many restrictions and just way too damned many skills and abilities and reliance upon same. The single most important part of adventuring used to be gathering information, followed closely by a try-anything spirit.

And are there any elements you look at in current RPGs and say, "why didn't I think of that?"

CC: "Skill usage" has come a long way from the old days, and I do like the way many systems frame the concept... but it's a two-edged sword. Systems with 'too specific' skills tend to hamper a player's ability to 'do anything they want to try' while systems with 'too generic' skills are difficult to use due to the lack of framework. I prefer the hybrid systems that use specific skills as 'things your character is really good at' while having as a backup statistical codification that can be used for infinite possibilities in terms of character action.

TK: No. I see only clutter, confusion and excessive codification.

What advice do you have for people considering roleplaying for the first time?

CC: Make sure your wife or girlfriend is on-board with the concept BEFORE you show up in your Star Trek uniform....

Seriously tho'

If you can play with someone familiar with the rules you choose the first couple of play sessions, you'll have a lot more fun. 'Page-flipping' is the biggest killer of RPGs that I can think of, while the experience of role-playing is so radically different than 'standard gaming' that those who engage in simply one or two enjoyable sessions will generally become role-players for the rest of their lives. Role playing is simply 'that much fun'.

JMW: There are lots of interesting "beginner box sets" out there providing good storylines and easy to play rules. There is no need to purchase a 50 dollar book to learn how to play the game.

TK: If you can't play at a convention where you have nothing invested in the character, you can just go with

the flow. Many games at many conventions are tailored for learning and beginners. Barring that, ask a good friend if they can figure out a way to "slip you into" an ongoing campaign in a position that does not necessarily increase the party's vulnerabilities.

ELDRITCH ENTERPRISES

Two new releases are expected to release this December, *One Got Away* (tentative title) from Tim Kask, and *The Hidden Prince* from Christopher Clark. *One Got Away* is a return to the deadly Isle of the Aradondo and describes the pursuit of a demonic dumok bent on returning his master, a hideous demon, to this plane of existence. Assault teams of trained Carnivorous Apes, Giant Mantises, and the deadly snares of the jungle challenge all that would face this diabolic threat. *The Hidden Prince* is the final installment in the Forest of Deceit series, and centers around several mysterious disappearances at a logging camp. Magic is in the very air that surrounds this besieged island of civilization, as the characters do their best to unravel the mystery, and save further lives. All coming this December!

Pictured artwork (see previous page) is not as yet approved... You're getting a truly 'first look'!

Randy Newnham is a mild-mannered tech support engineer by day and a gaming aficionado by night. He spends many evenings gaming with his wife, daughter and friends. He and his wife maintain an awesomely inspirational Game Shelf that houses their collection of board games and RPGs. You can check out their collection and other stories at Growing Up Gamers.

Links:
<http://growingupgamers.blogspot.com/>



Q&A MOEBIUS ADVENTURES

INTERVIEW WITH BRIAN FITZPATRICK
BY ERIK SCHMIDT

What was the origin of Moebius Adventures?

Late one night on the road, there was a deal with a crossroads demon. Nah. That's somebody else's origin.

Honestly, Moebius Adventures was formed through the work of myself and one of my best friends from college - Sean Bindel. We gamed a ton in college (everything from D&D, Palladium Fantasy, and Battletech to Cyberpunk, Ninjas & Superspies, Call of Cthulhu and Vampire - plus quite a few I'm forgetting) and after and at some point in the early 1990s we started toying with the idea of creating our own roleplaying game. It took some of the best parts of D&D and Palladium Fantasy and spun them out into something different. The core attributes of our system revolved around the concepts of Mind, Body, and Soul... M, B, and S - so we looked for some word we could twist with those three letters - and Moebius was born!

We toiled away at our little game and eventually sold our first book in 1997 - The Age of Phaedruss -- Book One: The Heroes (currently unavailable). We sold exactly one copy (home-printed on a laser printer, three-hole punched, in a binder mailed to the UK) and had two reviews on RPG.net. It was not well liked, though we had a blast playtesting and using it ourselves. This was before PDF sales of RPGs really took off. We were undeterred and over the next couple of years continued working on games and had grand plans for games such as Covert Directives (a near-future cyberpunk-ish game that utilized much of the same system) and Immortals Wake (a fantasy game based around elemental magic).

In 2000, Sean passed away unexpectedly and my world changed dramatically thereafter with a wife and kids. It took several years for me to get back to gaming regularly in any capacity, but in late 2005 I started working on pulling together a book of the core Moebius rules. I published the Moebius Adventures Core Rules book in November 2007, more than ten years after our publishing efforts began. It was my homage to Sean I think more than anything, and a labor of love. I gave away over 1,000 copies of the game during the Thanksgiving give-away sale at DriveThruRPG that year and had a few (albeit poor) reviews. It was at that point I realized the error of my ways. My strengths lie in designing worlds. Sean's strengths were in systems. And when I tried my hand at doing systems things didn't go well.

I decided to focus at that point on reviewing other people's games in 2009 and Game Knight Reviews was born in 2010. Though I wasn't doing a lot of my own writing, I was playing more regularly again and getting tons of ideas from reading other people's stuff. And GKR did really well for a couple of years.

That brings us up to late 2012 when I decided I'd try my hand at writing short, system-neutral supplements that played to my strengths: world building. One Spot #0: Hand's Goods was published in March 2013 with One Spot #1: The Painted Man a few months later. I was bitten by the bug and discovered that writing these little PDFs



I could not only express my creative side but help other gamers with problems that plagued me at the table from time to time. Who doesn't sometimes need a little help at the table with a location you can drop in or some NPCs or even just a little creativity boost?

Since restarting, I've produced over 30 products and don't seem to be slowing down much! I've had a few great reviews too, which has helped bolster my confidence.

Probably more than you wanted to know, eh? :)

What do you think most differentiates Moebius Adventures from other tabletop RPGs?

The original Moebius Adventures games were different because they were skills-based and not class-based. So you could have a character that mixed magic and weapons mayhem if you wanted to, or you could specialize and get some really cool tricks. Though development on that game system stalled out in 2007, I'm thankful I gained that experience. My goals for Moebius Adventures as a company have changed to provide more system-neutral (and genre-neutral to an extent) resources for GMs (and soon, players!) to make the tabletop roleplaying experience that much more fun and creative.

How do you think your day to day job as a software engineer influences your RPG publishing efforts?

Being a computer geek has certainly come in handy. I started my career writing software documentation, so my skills have always included writing. But knowing my way around a desktop publishing program has made a huge difference. And the basic application of algorithms (step-wise problem solving) appears in my products such as the Little Spaces, Insta-NPCs, and others. I hadn't really realized that particular fact until you asked this question, so thanks for the opportunity for introspection!

Between your day job, spending time with your family, publishing game materials, and writing for Game Knight Reviews, you keep quite busy. Do you have any special time management techniques for us mortals?

Heh. Time management is definitely a challenge. I spend a ton of time on the sidelines of soccer practices, games, and other places, and I always have a notebook with me. I brainstorm using mind maps and freewriting all the time and that's where most of my ideas come from. Then I just have to get enough time to translate my scribbles into those short products we've been talking about. So my one word of advice if you want to be productive as a writer is WRITE! There's always time in the darndest places. And READ! Anything you can get your hands on - from news articles on the web to nonfiction or fiction in subjects you're interested in. I'm always struck by strange notions while watching the news or listening to the radio while driving. So pay attention to your muse and be ready when the mood strikes. :)

Speaking of time, how frequently do you game, and what's the mix between in-person and virtual tabletop?

These days I play some D&D 4e every couple of weeks with a group of guys and try to fit in gaming with my girls whenever possible. I wish I could play more, but as you pointed out - time is a limiting factor for me these days. But I have a great time every time we play, so it makes those opportunities even more enjoyable I think.

As for in-person and virtual, I've honestly never tried virtual tabletop gaming other than getting a demo of the Dungeons & Dragons Virtual Table a couple of years ago.

I know there's been a huge explosion in virtual gaming since then, so I'm excited to try it out when and if I ever can find the time!

What prompted the creation of your Insta-NPC line of PDFs?

First came Little Spaces, which focused on giving the GM's muse some focused words to hone in on while writing descriptions, events, encounters, or what-not. But when I started pulling together the Big Book of Little Spaces: Haunts, my editor Jim White saw an appendix I'd included as an afterthought on helping create NPCs, he suggested spinning them off into their own book entirely. That led to the first two and the insanity has just gone from there!



Do you have a favorite example Insta-NPC?

Oh, tons. Among my favorites are: Frizz (Insta-NPCs #2), the happy troll who sees monsters in every shadow; the entire set of four in Insta-NPCs #4; Kimir of the goat people from Insta-NPCs #5... You get the idea. Every one has a little bit of a story - just enough for some creative GM to drop them into a game to cause trouble. :)

If you could only play one game (other than Moebius Adventures) for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Even though I haven't played the Moebius Adventures RPG in quite a few years now, I would have to say Dungeons & Dragons, any flavor. I expect I'll be playing D&D 4e or even 5e (which I'm just tinkering with now) for the foreseeable future!

OK, that last question was a bit silly. Here's a serious one: What brought you to support AetherCon, and what do you see is the future for virtual conventions?

As a lifelong member of the "I'll get to GenCon *this* year" club and never seeming to find the time, I think virtual conventions are amazing. With the advent of easier video conferencing and the explosion of virtual tabletop choices, it was only a matter of time before they cropped up. And honestly I'm glad. With my time constraints, not having to travel to get in some gaming (or talking about gaming) is phenomenal. I think AetherCon and similar efforts could fill darn near every weekend all year long - imagine a steady stream of 12 regular online conventions and then almost weekly minor-conventions! It could be non-stop gaming from around the world!

This question is also very serious: If you could be reborn as an AD&D character, what race and class would you choose?

Wizard. Has to be 5th level though so I get FIREBALL!!! (Far too many of my adventures in D&D revolve around "Fireball gone wrong" experiences!)

MOEBIUS ADVENTURES

Writer's block occasionally gets in the way of every GM, but what can we do about it? Why not use a tried-and-true method that goes back to the first edition of D&D? A random table!

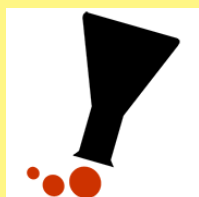
Moebius Adventures offers a line of creativity aids to help you roll a few dice, consult a few tables, and come up with a writing prompt to help out your muse when it gets stuck! Use Little Spaces to help create unique descriptions, Insta-NPCs to create NPCs with unique traits, and One Spots if you need a location to drop into a campaign!

For more information, news, and links to all products, visit www.moebiusadventures.com.

Erik Schmidt loves Tabletop RPGs and hosts a number of websites where you can find very helpful resources for all things RPG. Newbies to the hobby would absolutely love this guy. You see, he owns the fan-favorite site Learn Tabletop Roleplaying Games where you can find videos, links, and posts dedicated to teaching people about our beloved hobby. If he's not over at LTRPG, you can find him at Tabletop RPG Bulletin and Unpossible Labs.

Links:

<http://learntabletoprpgs.com/>
<http://tabletoprpgbulletin.com/>
<http://unpossiblelabs.com/>



FEST HALL

AetherCon III would like to thank the following people for taking the time to be a part of our Fest Hall this year by appearing in Themed Panels and Live Publisher Q&As:

Rich Baker - *Sasquatch Game Studios*
Joe Bardales - *Fainting Goat Games*
Wolfgang Baur - *Kobold Press*
T. Julian Bell - *RAEX Games*
Chris Birch - *Modiphius Entertainment*
Jodi Black - *Pinnacle Entertainment Group*
Jason Bulmahn - *Paizo*
Tim Burns - *Troll Lord Games*
James Carpio - *Gygax Magazine*
Andy Chambers - *Games Workshop*
Stephen Chenault - *Troll Lord Games*
Davis Chenault - *Troll Lord Games*
Christopher Clark - *Eldritch Enterprises, Inner City Game Designs*
Garrett Crowe - *Threat Detected*
Adam Daigle - *Paizo*
Chris Del Larosa - *Hunters Books*
Jayson Elliot - *Gygax Magazine*
Robert N. Emerson - *Rite Publishing*
George Fields - *Moebius Adventures*
Brian 'Fitz' Fitzpatrick - *Moebius Adventures*
Luke Gibson - *Trythlind Books & Games*
Jason Hardy - *Catalyst Game Labs*
Josh Harrison - *FASA*
Rob Heinsoo - *Pelgrane Press*
Kenneth Hite - *Pelgrane Press*
James Jacobs - *Paizo*
Michael Jenkins - *Privateer Press*
Mark Jones - *United Sight Studios*
Steve Kenson - *Green Ronin Publishing*
Tim Kask - *Eldritch Enterprises, Gygax Magazine*
Kevin Kulp - *Pelgrane Press*

Mike Lafferty - *Fainting Goat Games*
Eloy Lasanta - *Third Eye Games*
Mick Leach - *Eastern Front Studios*
Justin Andrew Mason - *Adventure-A-Week*
Mike Mason - *Chaosium*
Colin McComb - *3lb Games LLC*
Frank Mentzer - *Eldritch Enterprises*
Marc Miller - *Far Future Enterprises*
Jason Eric Nelson - *Legendary Games*
Jim Pinto - *Post World Games*
Stephen Radney-MacFarland - *Paizo*
James Raggi - *Lamentations of the Flame Princess*
Sean K. Reynolds - *Sean K. Reynolds Games*
Sarah Richardson - *Contessa*
Walt Robillard - *Hazard Studio*
Steve Russell - *Rite Publishing*
Carinn Seabolt - *Evil Beagle Games*
Oliver Shead - *Immersion Studios*
Bill Slavicsek - *Star Wars Historian*
Joe Sweeney - *Storyweaver Games*
Jeffery P. Talanian - *North Wind Adventures*
Ross Thompson - *KingdomCon*
Jonathan Tweet - *Veteran RPG Designer*
Ivan Van Norman - *Hunters Books*
Phil Vecchione - *Gnome Stew, Encoded Designs*
Rachel Ventura - *Legendary Games*
Robert Watts - *Hunters Books*
Charles White - *Fabled Environments*
Jason Wiebe - *Reaper Miniatures*

Q&A With TIMEWATCH RPG (PELGRANE PRESS)

INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN KULP
BY ERIK SCHMIDT

What was the genesis of TimeWatch, your latest tabletop RPG project?

I had just finished running a game of Night's Black Agents, the GUMSHOE superspy/horror game from Kenneth Hite, and I was lamenting the lack of a fun time travel game that embraced the sort of time manipulation tricks you find in movies: duplicating yourself, your future self - helping you in the past, that sort of thing. I realized that GUMSHOE mechanics could handle that beautifully. We had the basics roughed out by the end of lunch, and I started playtesting within a month.

The TimeWatch Kickstarter raised over \$105k. What do you think it was about the project that got people so excited?

I'll argue it's an underserved segment of gaming. Until recently, game prep for a time travel game was a pain in the butt, requiring encyclopedias and a trip to the library. Mobile devices, Wikipedia and alt-history forums make this a lot faster and a lot more fun.

I think it helps that we have incredible backers who weren't shy about telling their friends about the game. We made the game's playtest edition available to anyone who pledged, so folks could see for themselves whether or not they'd find it fun.

You and Pelgrane Press are involved in the AetherCon online game convention this year. Do you think virtual conventions and online tools like Infrno and Roll20 are going to start influencing how tabletop RPGs are designed?

I certainly trend towards designing and running games that are more cinematic and narrative in nature, games that work really well for online play. Precise tactical gameplay is more challenging online, so games that embrace it won't be run as often online. I love that virtual play is possible; it means that I can game with friends in New Zealand, or Germany, or London who I'd never see otherwise.

You've created and worked on everything from family-style card games to digital games. How do you think that breadth of experience informs your work on RPGs?

Let's call that "eclectic." I'm of the opinion that the more games you play and deconstruct, the more tools you have for good game design. The best result is that I don't have a lot of mercy when it comes to ripping apart my own designs. "Kill your darlings," I've been taught, and that helps me evaluate rules I love but that don't yet work the way I want them to.

What's your go-to game for introducing new players to the world of tabletop RPGs?

With no experience at all? Feng Shui or Night's Black Agents. Not everyone is steeped in fantasy, and not everyone loves horror, but everyone has seen an action movie or a James Bond film. That makes them incredibly accessible.

Based on your tweets I see that you're a strong supporter of diversity in gaming. Why is inclusion important to tabletop gaming as a hobby and as an industry?



One of my players tried to learn D&D back in high school. Her character died in the first fight, and the DM wouldn't let her roll up another. "This game is stupid," she said, and didn't play for another 20 years.

That's not unusual. If people of all genders and races feel like they're welcomed—if they feel like the game encourages them to be heroic—that's going to produce more integrated and more interesting groups for everyone. And hey, more industry sales, too.

The past few months have been rife with toxic sexism and bullying in the gaming industry. Speaking out against it is important. To stay silent sounds a lot like condoning it, and I don't have much patience for that.

If you were a TimeWatch agent and had to go back in time to fix something, what era would you most want to visit?

Wow, good question. I think I'd like to watch the start of the Zanclean Deluge, when the Atlantic poured past the Straits of Gibraltar to entirely fill up the empty Mediterranean basin in something like 10 months. Can you imagine the vast and endless waterfall?

I'll sell postcards.

What's it like playing a GUMSHOE game with the Pelgrane Press crew?

I never have! I've played 13th Age with them, and a secret game under development, and Owl Hoot Trail is a favorite. They are a complete joy to game with. One of these years we're all going to be in the right place at the right time play GUMSHOE, and it will be a joy.

That said, Rob Heinsoo was in an Ashen Stars game I ran a few years back, and was *amazing.*

Carolina, Kansas City, Memphis, or Texas BBQ?

Rough call. Let's say Kansas City. So, SO good. But I'm from New England! My opinion on BBQ is inherently suspect

Erik Schmidt loves Tabletop RPGs and hosts a number of websites where you can find very helpful resources for all things RPG. Newbies to the hobby would absolutely love this guy. You see, he owns the fan-favorite site Learn Tabletop Roleplaying Games where you can find videos, links, and posts dedicated to teaching people about our beloved hobby. If he's not over at LTRPG, you can find him at Tabletop RPG Bulletin and Unpossible Labs.

Links:

<http://learntabletoprpgs.com/>
<http://tabletoprpgbulletin.com/>
<http://unpossiblelabs.com/>



TIMEWATCH

Mongols just rolled across western Europe? Nazis with nuclear weapons? Dinosaurs in New York? You've got a time machine, high-powered weapons and a whole lot of history to save. Welcome to TimeWatch!

TimeWatch, by Kevin Kulp, is a GUMSHOE game of investigative time travel. You are a defender of history, an elite TimeWatch agent plucked out of your native era and trained to stop saboteurs from ripping history apart. Your training allows you to diagnose disruptions in the time stream and track down the cause, making conclusions that less capable investigators might just guess at. The TimeWatch rules presume that you are a highly competent badass. Who are you to prove them wrong?

TimeWatch is in development and will be published by Pelgrane Press in Q1, 2015.

Q&A With RAEX GAMES

INTERVIEW WITH T. JULIAN BELL
BY RANDALL NEWNHAM

Tell me about the Kromore RPG. What makes it unique?

Players have some serious options and choices in Kromore. Every level offers something substantial and makes players feel useful. If you want to play a character that wields magic, fires a disruptor pistol, and wears heavy armor you can create that character.

We understand storytellers are going to change things to fit their own needs so we created a base universe with tons of history. There is a strong narrative going from the start of Kromore's history straight through to the end and we highlight important moments in time for people to expand upon in their own games.

Combat offers some unique elements with our three action combat system. It's fast, easy and makes players feel like their characters are worth something. You don't have that endless grind of combat you see in a lot of games. Combat in Kromore is about tactical strategy, but every choice allows an organic story to unfold.

You went to Kickstarter to fund Kromore. How was that experience?

Kickstarter numbers are something gaming stores and customers look at to see the interest in new products. If you make a dent then stores are more likely to stock your book on their shelves. We had launched the Kromore idea back in 2013, but being so new to the crowd source world, it was more of a dry run for us. This year we raised 25k and had roughly 300 backers. Overall a wonderful experience.

I have to say the backers were truly amazing and it is awesome how much influence Kickstarter can have on a new project. We are so grateful. We have spent every penny on the books, art, and rewards from the kickstarter and couldn't do anything without those funds.

Would you consider a Kromore adventure to be substantially different from one made for of the mainstream RPGs? Does the system & setting itself carry its own narrative style?



I think fans of RPG's in general will really appreciate Kromore as a system and setting that works for whatever it is needed. One day you might play a high fantasy dungeon crawling adventure and the next a deeply role play filled space saga. We give you a massive history and lots of wonderful moments in time to use as a backdrop. How you use that backdrop is entirely up to the players and storyteller.

What challenges did you face when making the game, design-wise? Was there any part of the rules that ended up being significantly harder to design than you thought?

Attacking an RPG from the ground up is full of challenges. Ultimately the biggest challenge as a designer was learning how to add and drop ideas I grew attached to. Luckily I found testers that were open to experimentation. Certain ideas early on were stuck in my mind as things that were absolute. It's also something I saw testing with a lot of gamers that looked at every game through the glasses of another.

What is the one element of the Kromore RPG that you feel the most proud of, and why?

The hardest element isn't one aspect of the game design, but finding how to make it all flow cohesive. Ultimately designing Kromore as something new meant it standing on its own legs. I finally hit a point where I had to look at some of the mechanics and drop them for better things. Trust my gut.

The three action combat system definitely. The attacking and defending mechanics of Kromore are smoothly done with three actions. It makes players feel like they can accomplish something in a turn. Skills are mainly performed as one action so combinations are always different in combat based on the circumstances. One action attacks, two actions attacks, fitness, movement, grapples, healing, and focus spell casting are a few of the options at a player's disposal. Everything changes when different enemies' defenses are factored in. It makes story the focus in combat as every choice a player makes fits organically instead of rudimentary.

Now that the game is finished I'm seeing a lot more experimentation in what players bring to games. It's awesome to see how far they push boundaries and how much those boundaries still flow with the game. I'm thrilled to see the game finally out there being enjoyed.

KROMORE

The Kromore Role Playing Game is a new tabletop roleplaying experience that blends player options with a massive, open-genre universe.

The 352-page, beautifully illustrated book has everything players and storytellers need to adventure in the massive world of Kromore.

Play in Fantasy, Steampunk, medieval, Sci Fi, or Modern eras. Practice the ways of the Sci-magi with realm magic. Hunt down demons from the outer realms. Encounter aliens & demigods as you explore the universe. Customize unique characters, weapons, vehicles & armor. Explore a massive setting over Kromore's 10,000 year timeline.

The system brings extensive choice to players in its uniquely strategic three action combat system blending new ideas with old for easy to play strategic adventures. A tabletop rpg game filled with wonder and excitement at every corner. An easy to use game system that gives choice to players. Hundreds of abilities & dozens of character professions. A diverse range of races, weapons, and armor to fit your characters game.

Kromore is here.

Randy Newnham is a mild-mannered tech support engineer by day and a gaming aficionado by night. He spends many evenings gaming with his wife, daughter, and friends. He and his wife maintain an awesomely inspirational Game Shelf that houses their collection of board games and RPGs. You can check out their collection and other stories at Growing Up Gamers.

Links:

<http://growingupgamers.blogspot.com/>



ARTIST ENCLAVE/SPEED PAINTING DUEL PARTICIPANTS

AetherCon III would like to thank the following artists for contributing their works to this year's Artists Enclave:

Jason Cole
Chris Malidore
Jeff A. Menges
Will O'Brien
Jeff Perry
James E. Shields
Eve Skylar
Lee Smith
George Vega
David Michael Wright

We would also like to thank the following artists for being participants in this year's Speed Painting Duels taking place in The Wandering Toad:

Colin Chan
Jason Cole
Miguel Coronado III
Axel Ezequiel
Jon Gibbons
Dion Harris
Chris Malidore
CJ Marsh
Patrick McEvoy
Jeremy McHugh
William O'Brien
Mike Perry
Je Shields
Eve Skylar
Lee Smith
George Vega
Britney Winthrope
David Michael Wright

Q&A With STORYWEAVER GAMES

INTERVIEW WITH JOE SWEENEY
BY BRIAN FITZPATRICK

It's been a long while since I've had an opportunity for an interview! Thankfully, Joe Sweeney of StoryWeaver Games was kind enough to subject himself to a few questions about his gaming career, StoryWeaver, and more...

So let's get started!

When the world was young, what brought you to the world of RPGs?

I can remember this very well. I was about 10 years old at the time (yes, dinosaurs had just died off) and was invited next door by the rather geeky neighbour. He had the ol' school Dungeons & Dragons set and told me that he was going to show me how to play. Not knowing any better I agreed and we quickly rolled up a magic user character. I don't quite remember how the game started, but I do recall how it ended some 90 minutes later: my character was hiding behind a rock while a bunch of orcs passed by. I actually felt the fear of the character that I was playing, and when I realised that I had been sucked into the story to such a degree, I realised that this was a hobby for me! Deciding to face my fears, I popped up from behind the rock and let loose with some magic spell or

other – I think was magic missile – only to be clobbered the death by the orcs in short order. I had four hit points. At that point I realised that this was really the hobby for me!

About six years after that I began writing my own games: the first being Knight Errant, a generic fantasy rule set, then a more advanced version of that game built on a matrix of character attributes, before delving into the mad side of game design with Animal Agents, based firmly in the world of danger mouse (how I loved Danger Mouse).

What is your favorite story as a player at the game table?

My favourite story at the game table is pretty much the same as my books. I want them to be character driven stories. I want the characters to suffer, to change, to be steadfast, to learn lessons or remain in ignorance, or better still to fall from grace! For me stories are all about exploring the "human condition," whatever that is, and there is no better way to do this than taking on new roles within a story. This can be whimsical, or can be deadly serious. Either way, a good cast of characters usually means a good game.

DENIABLE

"EXPLOSIVE ACTION"
- THE DAILY FAIL

"A SEXY, DANGEROUS
NEW SERIES...****!"
- TV TIMES UK

"QUIRKY. MAD. BAD."
- LONDON BUSINESS REV

WWW.STORYWEAVER.COM

As you grew more powerful in the ways of the StoryWeaver, how did you earn the title of “Award Winning Game Master”?

I got the title of Award Winning Game Master when one of the oldest gaming convention organisers in Sydney presented me with an “Excellence in Gaming” award for all of the game mastering I had been doing with them over the years. It was completely unexpected, and I remember that I was deeply touched. Most of my game mastering at conventions (and other public events) has been a labour of love: I believe that we need to always give something to the gaming community, be that time, mentoring, or even games publishing. Apparently, that love shines though at the table, as my games are usually fully booked at cons, which makes con organisers lives a lot easier. Hence the title of “Award Winning Game Master.” Oh, I also have a bookshelf stacked with RPG trophies... and a prized rubber duck.

For others seeking wisdom at your feet, what are the top three GM tips you can share?

The first, most important, thing to do is understand the motivations of your players, and then bring those motivations into the game for their characters. This may sound a little abstract, but it's actually pretty basic psychology. Players engage in a game to have fun. Different people obtain fun in different ways (and this changes at different times). Some want to explore their character in detail, others want to embrace a strange new world, while others want to delve into the statistics of the game mechanics itself. Others want to weave stories. Some players even want dominance over the others!

As a GM it's really important that you give each player the ability to meet their own personal motivations otherwise they will not think the game is “fun”. The only way you can do this is by ensuring that every character at the table has at least one or more scene that their players will feel fully engaged with. The hard part is to do this simultaneously, so that each scene provides opportunity for multiple players to be fully engaged in the game in the way which they deem “fun.”

The second bit of advice, related to the above, is that you need to be able to understand your players really, really well. I mean really REALLY well. You need to know what will upset them, what will make them laugh, what will bring them to tears. The best example of this I have ever seen was in the British TV series The IT Crowd in the episode “Jen the Fredo.” If you've not seen it, please grab a copy. It is perfect game mastery. It was also the funniest thing I've ever seen on TV!

The final bit of advice is to plan, but not overdo it. Another way of thinking about this is when your players derail your carefully prepared adventure, roll with it. When players go off the rails, they are telling you what sort of adventure they want to have, as opposed what you want to have. As a GM is your job to be of service to the players. Which means, let them get away with some crazy stuff from time to time. Of course you have to

HIGH SPACE



“Wonderful space opera. Great rules, great art, and I love the “ships as characters” in the second book. This is now my go-to space book for Savage Worlds...”

- Timothy S. at DriveThruRPG

www.storyweaver.com



★★★★★
STORYWEAVER
COMMITTED TO GAMING EXCELLENCE

balance this with in-game threats, otherwise the games simply fall apart into meaningless wish fulfillment. So it is always a balancing act.

When approaching a virtual table as opposed to an actual one, what must a GM remember?

I've only been using virtual table tops for a couple of years now. The first I used was Fantasy Grounds, but now most of my play takes place in hangouts with Roll 20. I find that the virtual table tops are much better for games that are largely tactical, such as D&D, or completely story driven, such as Deniable, and Apocalypse World. To be honest, when I approach virtual table tops, I pretty much steer clear of the tactical games now, and solely go for the story driven games. Does that make be a "story swine?". Absolutely! Oink oink!

What are the keys to exploring the world of horror at the game table without sacrificing sanity to the Old Ones?

If I told you that, I'd have to kill you! Or perhaps you'd kill me first? Who can tell!

Actually, I produced a short video that discusses the psychological and physiological foundations of fear, and how you can use that knowledge to create a great horror gaming experience. Rather than going into detail, what I would say is that a good horror game uses the same mental pathways as humour: it is about cognitive dissonance. You want to give people just enough 'fear' in a manner that does not trigger deeper fight or flight reactions. I've run horror games where I genuinely upset people, which took them out of the story and thus game. Not fun. These days I'm much more careful and introduce horror – even gratuitous splatter horror – in a way that most people would find amusing and ridiculous. You can think of this as the difference between "Cabin in the Woods" and "Saw."

What is your favorite story as a GM at the game table?

I don't really know to be honest. It depends upon the group of people around the table. If I know the gaming group are largely "story swine" in the game is going to be all about their character development, or exploring (and blowing up) social concepts. If I am playing with a group of "hard-core gamers" then the game might be a little bit more plot driven, with quite a bit more combat. Either way I'm happy just to be getting some gaming time!

I've mentioned this above, but I see GMing primarily as a way being of service to the gamers. It's a discipline. Thus, it's not so much what sort of game I want to play, as much as what the players want to play.

Of course there are some game mechanics that I really don't enjoy. But that's a completely separate discussion.

What drew you towards the dark side (publishing) side of gaming?

I began writing games when I was about 15-16 years old. However it was not until I turned 40 that I decided to finally publish. To be honest, I was far too shy, even embarrassed, to publish. Which is rubbish of course, because my games rule! :-)

What actually happened is that I got some really good personal coaching, and began to realise that there were reasons why I wasn't pushing myself to publish games. Basically, putting yourself out there in the market is a sure way to scare the crap out of yourself. I talked to quite a few other gamers, including some folks who have written absolutely brilliant materials for cons and realise that this was a common situation. So when I published Rapture, which was not the first ever game I wrote (far from it) it was as much a way of me facing my fears as anything else. Yes I know that sounds very new age and hokey pokey, but it is actually the way it all came about.

In fact, StoryWeaver has been structured as a business in order to help others overcome their fear of publishing (putting themselves out there). I'm a real believer that many, many gamers have a game inside them just wanting to burst out and take the market by storm. Now with the Internet, virtual table tops, kickstarters and all the other channels available to us, there's really no longer an excuse.

Any guidance for prospective publishers? Perhaps the top three things to remember as they start down the dark path?

First: being a game designer is a bit like being a musician. Don't give up your day job.

Second: don't scrimp on production excellence. Surround yourself with people who are better than you. No really I mean this. You will need to invest heavily in artwork, editing, and play testing. It's not enough to have a great game or even great writing. The entire package needs to be put together professionally and beautifully. That, more than anything else, is where people fall over.

Third: Playtest! Playtest! Playtest! And don't stop until you have completely rewritten the game. Twice.

What has been your favorite project so far as a publisher, writer, or artist?

That is a hard question! Too many!

Rapture still has a huge place in my heart. I did the original artwork, wrote the text, produced the audio files, background music, and more. From the ground up, I wanted to make Rapture a completely engrossing, transmedia gaming experience, yet retain the purity of the tabletop experience. It's also a truly evil product, in that on the surface it can be played as a schlock horror game, yet underneath that it poses some deep theological, and philosophical questions. Plus, how many other games are there where you can only earn experience by having your characters killed off in horrible, horrible ways?!

Another project I really enjoyed working on was Hael, a sort of sci-fi fantasy mash up by Patrick Taylor. Its production quality was high, and took ages, but I really

enjoyed working on it. Unfortunately Hael has not sold too well: perhaps just bad timing, or too many fantasy settings already for Savage Worlds? Makes me a bit sad.

These days I've been enjoying working on the soon to be published game "Deniable" which is about as far away from Rapture as you can get. The artwork is all stark photography, the world setting light, and the tone incredibly sardonic and humorous. There is no real deep subtheme to Deniable, other than "people are all pretty messed up, and that's just fine." What I like about Deniable is that it simply plays well, even with newbies. The extended play-test phase has given me some of the most fun games I've ever played.

Brian "Fitz" Fitzpatrick is a Writer and Game Designer who is constantly trying to avoid a gruesome death by low-flying soccer ball. Though he spends his days as a code monkey, he lives for the time he spends with his family, gaming or thinking about gaming throughout the week. He's constantly adding to his Big Book of Little Spaces and owns the websites Game Knight Reviews and Moebius Adventures where he keeps all his writing projects.

Links:

<http://www.gameknightreviews.com/>

<http://blog2.moebiusadventures.com/>



MOEBIUS ADVENTURES

[HTTP://WWW.MOEBIUSADVENTURES.COM](http://www.moebiusadventures.com)

DENIABLE

Deniable is a fun, darkly satirical game designed for small gaming groups.

It's a game about decidedly average English people coerced into participating in 'operations of national importance' by a shadowy espionage Organisation. The object of the game is to tell interesting stories about people put in a situation for which they are not at all prepared.

It's big on paranoia. It's big on drama. It's big on fun.

Deniable tips its hat to those wonderfully wicked British TV espionage series such as Spy and Spooks. Each game of Deniable involves everyone collaborating to create episodes of satirical, darkly humorous (or just grim) British style TV shows.

Deniable also borrows the structure of TV shows, including the roles the gamers play. There are three roles that are needed: The Director, the Protagonists, and the Extras (often called Non Player Characters or NPCs in other roleplaying games). Unlike other roleplaying games, everyone plays Extras, not just the Director. And it's by playing each other's families and friends that the real fun begins. It's all about messing with the Protagonist... keeping them juggling their secret lives and personal lives!

The sorts of scenes that play out for the characters in Deniable range from scenes about the need to hide the characters' double lives from friends and family, to them having to make questionable moral choices during a mission... just who are they working for anyway?

For more information, and to download the play test beta, visit www.storyweaver.com

Q&A With United Sight Studios

INTERVIEW WITH
MARKER JONES BY
ANGELA MURRAY

Please give a warm welcome to Marker Jones, head of United Sight Studios and the creative force behind the recently released 'Worlds of Rage'. Marker worked as both game designer and writer for the game which has an original skill-based system and a unique science fiction setting. How did you get into gaming?

In the summer of 1991, my high school friend bought a board game called Hero Quest. It was so far from the family-favorite Monopoly that I was hooked. We heard of a local gaming group starting that December. We mistakenly thought it meant board games. We went there to check it, found out about D&D, Rifts and Marvel Superheroes, and the course of my life changed forever.

Which came first with Worlds of Rage, the setting or the system?

The system for WoR was probably the 14th one I

tested. Originally the system used every die you can imagine. After clunking through one rough combat after another, I ended up streamlining it to the current system. Surprisingly, the system as stands came to me at a gas station. I was waiting in line to pay for my gas and noticed this station sold six-sided dice. We had recently had a gaming store close in town and people were wondering where they were going to buy their dice from. When I got thinking about how readily available six-sided dice were, everything fell into place from there.

What was your biggest obstacle in going from concept to print?

Absolutely artwork! It took me seven years to find an artist. I had been to local establishments that do custom artwork and was turned down. I went to the art department at the local university and found no interest. I had to turn to online freelance boards before I found someone willing to help me out.



That artist's prices increased when it came to the cover. A friend and playtester of mine introduced me to his tattoo artist and she jumped at the chance to do the cover.

What media (books, movies, comics, etc.) were an influence on the setting?

I am a HUGE fan of Frank Herbert's DUNE series. If anything, that inspired me incredibly. I am also a big science and sci-fi fanatic, so this led to inspiration from classic Star Trek episodes, Battlestar Galactica, Outer Limits, etc. Being a fan of what is known as "hard sci-fi," I also got some inspiration from actual science and history.

How does the system in World of Rage stand out from other games?

To me, and admittedly by design, "WoR" is far simpler than most games out there. Everyone is familiar with D&D, but it is really one of the more complicated systems available, what with multiclassing, talents, feats, level progression, challenge ratings, attack bonuses, armor class, etc. "WoR" is sweet, simple and to the point. The game is skill based meaning most any action your character attempts falls back on one of his or her skills. Combat and standard task resolution are all skill checks, there is no other secondary system to learn as there is with other games, even independent ones. Everything is designed to happen with minimal die rolling. The attack roll determines if you hit, where you hit and how hard you hit; yes, when playing "WoR" you are rolling attack and damage at the same time.

"WoR" doesn't have a system of hit points per se, but the character sheet lists how much damage each individual part of your body can take. If one part of the body takes too much damage, skills involving that part of the body increase in difficulty by the amount of damage that body part has taken. If a body part is shut down due to damage, skills involving that part of the body cannot be attempted.

What aspects of current or old RPG trends did you find yourself wanting to bring into Worlds of Rage?

Some of the more narrative aspects of 13th Age I think are wonderful. I love the concept of plot points from Cortex games. I am a complete fan of the way Marvel Heroic lets players spend XP into the story rather than into their characters. If I ever get to do a second edition of WoR, expect some form of point mechanic that lets players buy into

the story more than what we have now.

Are there any plans for additional settings using this system?

Those plans are already under way. During playtesting, some of the testers enjoyed the system so much that they came to me and pitched their own ideas for games asking if they could use the Stage Level system, as I am calling it. These talks are still under way. I am not free to mention any names yet, but I am currently looking at acquiring a minimum of three titles onto the system.

Besides AetherCon, are there any upcoming conventions or events where readers could get a chance to play Worlds of Rage?

The weekend following AetherCon, in fact. The Kansas City RPG Guild will be having their annual gaming convention at the KC Airport Hilton. United Sight has a dealer's table and we will be running demos of the game all weekend, run by myself, some playtesters, and even some of the ones pitching games to us (although none of those in pitch phase will be demoed that weekend, sorry).

I also run demos and campaigns on Roll20.net, Infrno.net, Google Hangouts, etc. Look me up on virtual table tops as Firepart Creature.

What can we look forward to seeing from United Sight Studios in the future?

We have already begun work on the first of two supplements for "WoR." After that, further supplements will be determined based on response from the community. We are also moving forward with a fiction line set in the "WoR" universe to give more depth and detail to how we see the worlds, and to illustrate certain events in the story's past, such as the Limthrakk Civil War. Beyond that, I have put out feelers to different independent writers about creating original settings in the "WoR" universe. There are other ideas that involve other companies, and I will announce those when deals are finalized.

Do you have any advice to share for beginning game designers trying to bring their games out?

I found I benefited from having a group in the latter part of the process, combing through the books to find things I had overlooked or hadn't considered yet. I already had the basic concept and

all necessary writing and graphic design skills to begin the groundwork, but games are a community affair (refer to the above passage about my need for artwork to demonstrate this). I used community connections as well as the local university for artists, proofreaders, playtesters, etc. When the community failed me, I took my search online. That never failed me.

The advantage to designers now is that we have print on demand and pdf services. You don't even need to worry about a publishing house anymore, you can just get your book published as a pdf with your home computer, make it available in an online form, use the online market to get the word out (social media, reddit, etc) and word will spread that way.

Absolutely do conventions. There is no better way to meet people, introduce yourself and get word out of your game than at a convention. Whether online or in person doesn't matter, just get the word out.

Look into other methods of marketing your book. "WoR" is incorporating ideas such as T-shirts, posters, etc to get the word out. I have found since I started this book that game designers are some of the most approachable people you will ever meet. I attended conventions where professional game designers were making appearances and approached, introduced myself and my product, and every one of them met me as an equal and showed interest. It was an amazing level of acceptance. So make connections, learn your craft, and do what you love. We're all out here waiting to play your games.

WORLDS OF RAGE

"Worlds of Rage" carries players to an entirely new sci-fi universe, where there is an uneasy alliance between the different races of the galaxy. This political turmoil and racial tension is central to the storyline and feeds off of current events in almost any newspaper in the world, giving the unfamiliar universe a familiar feel. It allows players to explore very realistic social and philosophical ideas in the fantasy realm.

But "Worlds of Rage" isn't just about headlines. From action, political intrigue and mystery to horror, suspense and drama, players can follow captivating storylines, and the game can be adapted in numerous ways to grow with players and change with the times. The dice mechanics are simple, straightforward and easy to learn, and combat is intense, brutal and fast.

Angela Murray has been an avid gamer for over twenty-five years, from 1st Edition D&D to today's vast landscape of awesome games. She is a GM, a writer, and is one of the gnome-y additions to the very hearty Gnome Stew. When not running games, she's out fighting crime (and paying the rent) by working for a geospatial imaging company. She also writes for the all female gaming blog, Rogue Princess Squadron which she co-founded.



GNOME STEW

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and Meaty Bits of Gnome

CREDITS

AetherCon III Staff

AetherCon III would like to thank our staff members for volunteering their time and efforts to bring our event to you. Without them, this never would have been possible.

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We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the following Organized Gaming Reps:

Jesse R Davis - Pathfinder Society

Brad Kelley - Shadowrun Missions

Michael Long - Dungeons & Dragons Adventurer's League

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AetherCon IV

November
13-15, 2015

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